

The Republican.

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COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE KING, CARLTON PALACE.

SIR,

Dorchester Gaol, April 13, 1825.

I AM very glad to see those papers, which are under the patronage of your ministers, begin to express fear of the separation of Ireland from the government of England. That separation will as assuredly come, and Ireland maintain an independent government, as that I am writing to you from Dorchester Gaol. I do not prophecy the precise year in which this will happen; it may be the present, or not for twenty years to come. It is political insanity to force a union between the two Islands, when a more profitable union to both could be made by free trade and mutual independence. Sovereignty without benefit is a contemptible authority, alike to the governors and governed: and this is the case of the sovereignty of England over Ireland. Ireland can never become more inimical to England, nor England to Ireland, than at present and during the past connection; whilst separation and independence would link the two Islands in close alliance by mutual benefits. The principles of trade, to which your ministers are approaching, fully explain my conclusions. It appears, that, in every instance, the revenue has benefitted by the removal of tax from articles of consumption. The former tax stood in the same light towards taxers and taxed as the present oppressive union between England and Ireland towards governors and governed: a loss to both.

The following paragraph is copied from the New Times newspaper for April 12:—

“It must not be forgotten, that while our policy tends to detach from the Spanish Government nineteen millions of persons in South America, and three millions in the Philippine Islands, Spain, and the other Continental Powers, are

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disposed in return, to promote the separation of Ireland from the British Empire. Our wisest policy is, no doubt, to counteract those views by a liberal and indulgent treatment of the Irish people. Nor is it to be overlooked, that the great majority of Irishmen are members of the same communion with the South Americans. It would be singular, that while we maintain the cause of liberality toward Catholics in the Western Hemisphere, we should act on opposite principles with relation to our own fellow-subjects in a neighbouring island. The Continental enemies of Great Britain, no doubt, anticipate this inconsistency in our conduct, and flatter themselves that the result will be another 1776."

The wisest policy will be to give independence to Ireland and not to let it be conquered.

Here it may be clearly seen, that, in silencing the clamour for radical Reform, your ministers and their supporters have imbibed its spirit. It is the case with all barbarous conquerors to be enlightened by those whom they conquer and oppress. I shall not despair of making you and all my enemies, very soon, as wise as Atheists.

I am, Sir, your prisoner,

RICHARD CARLILE.

COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE KING,
CARLTON PALACE.

SIR,

Dorchester Gaol, April 17, 1825.

THE question of Catholic Emancipation is but the smallest part of a larger question, or that of mental emancipation, of free discussion. As an isolated part, to the real philanthropist, it is a question of no importance, a trifle that may be remedied by the gaining of more important matters, by excluding all state distinctions for matters of opinion, and by ceasing to legislate about opinions, which can never form the subject of wise distinctions and good laws.

Hitherto, certain men, under the titles of Kings and Priests, have felt themselves competent, or have assumed the authority, to say to other men—"you shall not examine this subject, express your opinion upon that matter, nor partake in common with us of certain state benefits? You shall do nothing which tends to undermine the authority which we

have usurped over you." But such men must be put down for the public good.

I do not include the present King of England in this class of usurpers; for your very usurped authority seems to be again usurped from you by others who pretend to act as your servants and officers. I verily believe, that you do not care one jot about Catholic Emancipation, mental emancipation, or free discussion, further than that you have no objection to its accomplishment, in the larger sense of removing all pains and penalties and exclusions from matters of opinion.

Be the master, then, and not the servant of your professed servants. Make them to do what you wish upon the important subject of mental emancipation, and of anti-hypocrisy, and listen not to Constitutional Advisers and Conscience Keepers, who have neither constitution nor conscience of their own to keep. I have been near six years a prisoner; because I am so violent, that I will not be a hypocrite, nor the holder of opinions which I dare not utter; and you may challenge your constitutional advisers and conscience keepers to shew a single reason for my imprisonment, either in its origin or continuance, but that of the gratification of a base and paltry revenge. The law never took cognizance of any one action of mine, nor have I done an act of which the law could take cognizance, since I have arrived at the age of discretion. I am imprisoned for opinions about which the law cannot take cognizance, though lawyers and priests may. My enemies cannot shew a single object to be gained by my continued imprisonment; for those very opinions, for the publication of which I am imprisoned, are daily promulgated throughout the country, by others, with impunity. My offence, in the eyes of mine enemies, might consist in having set so noble an example; but, as I have evidently triumphed over them, as they are evidently silenced and dare not even publicly open their mouths or move their pens to defend their opinions against my assaults, was ever any thing so base before, as their continuing my imprisonment? Why do not your Mr. Peel and your Lord Eldon institute prosecutions so long as the anti-christian works of Paine and Palmer are openly sold? Why do not they do this? Consistency demands a continuation of the prosecutions, or a release of such persons as are confined under such past prosecutions. Their minds might be too narrow to perceive the tendency of their own acts; but every other discerning person can see a violation of law, an outrage on consistency

and decency in keeping men imprisoned for the act of selling certain books, when those very books are still openly sold, and the opinions published in them maintained triumphantly in public assemblies.

I am told, that Mr. Peel is very much annoyed at the existence of the Christian Evidence Society ; but that he deems it prudent, at least, to let it alone to proceed uninterruptedly. Were he a wise man, he would not be *annoyed* by any thing of the kind ; but, like an honest man, change his errors for truths as fast as they were unfolded to him.

I am, Sir, your prisoner,

RICHARD CARLILE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE REPUBLICAN.

SIR,

I INCLOSE the following for you with the observations which I have subjoined.

MORNING HERALD, APRIL 6, 1825.

DR. SPURZHEIM'S LECTURES.

THE Tenth Lecture, delivered by the Doctor last night related to the intellectual faculties, and the external senses, as they are connected with phrenology. As we have not noticed the preceding lectures, it will be necessary to the understanding of those that follow to make a few observations, by way of introduction.

Phrenology depends on the principle of induction. The phrenologist declares that, by comparing cerebral development with the manifestations of mental power, in an extensive variety of instances, he has arrived at the conclusion that the brain is the material instrument by means of which the *mind* acts and is acted upon. He tells us that each mental faculty has a material organ in its exclusive service, as it were, and it is by this organ that the hidden faculty acts and is acted upon. According to the principles of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, the brain consists of two hemispheres ; each hemisphere is endowed with corresponding organs, functions, dimensions, &c. ; so that in every individual's

head, there are two organs for each faculty. The size of the organ is manifested exteriorly on the surface of the head, and the power of each faculty is in proportion to the size of the material organ which answers to it. It has been objected to this science, that it leads to what is called *materialism*, or the belief that the composition of the *thinking principle is matter*, and not spirit. This has been a great school question. Dr. Spurzheim's defence against this charge is, in the first place, that if it be true that the thinking principle is matter, then it is a duty to establish the truth. Next he says that the accusers are wrong in their logic; for he says, though it appears that the whole thinking power is made up of matter—in short, that the mind is the brain, and the brain is mind—yet it does not follow by any means that the mind of man may not live *hereafter* if the CREATOR intended that it should. To those, then, who object on religious grounds to his system, he says, “it is you that are injuring the cause of GOD, for you strive to limit his power—you say that if mind is matter, it is mortal—it dies with the individual, and that GOD cannot give it imperishable preservation. It is clearly an error in reasoning to state as an axiom, that the end for which any thing is fitted is invariably declared by the nature of its substance. Nature, continues Dr. Spurzheim, has endowed man with faculties fitted to observe phenomena as they at present exist, and the relation subsisting between them, but has denied to him powers fitted to discover, as a matter of direct perception, either the beginning or the end, or the essence of any thing.”

The greater part of the Lecture last night, was occupied in the description of the intellectual organs generally. The Lecturer showed that the animal senses were but the instruments of communication between the inward intellect of man and the external world; and that knowledge was acquired by the means of the senses. He endeavoured to show that the extent of the forehead was the criterion of the comprehensiveness of the mind. The negroes and those remarkable for the narrowness of their intellect had small foreheads. Those who were eminent for their intellectual powers had large foreheads. Socrates, Plutarch, Franklin, and all those who had distinguished themselves by their superior intelligence, were remarkable for the largeness of their foreheads. The Lecturer produced masks of several of these individuals.

Now, as I believe Dr. Spurzheim to be an intelligent and

worthy Phrenologist, I am surprized at the great error in reasoning that he has been guilty of, in the above statement, if, which I have no reason to doubt, it be fairly detailed. For when he says, that although the material brain be the mind itself, yet that mind may exist *hereafter*, if the CREATOR pleases; he forgets that the same arguments founded on induction which would make the mind to be merely the active state of the material brain, would also resolve the Deity into the active principle of the material universe. The same course of inductive reasoning too, which would ascribe the various powers of the human mind—to certain organs of the Brain, is, likewise, calculated to make us ascribe the various powers of nature generally to properties in certain parts of the universe. The existence of a *single immaterial God of the universe*, is as much an assumption as that of a *single immaterial soul in man*. To get quit, therefore, of all difficult questions respecting one assumed principle, by referring to another, seems to me to be, one of the greatest errors in philosophy. We know by the light of human intelligence, nothing but the phenomena which we observe in their mutual relations of conjunction with one another, and from this conjunction of phenomena our minds are provided with an organ which enables us to infer cause and effect.

A natural question arises—How came men, who derive all knowledge through the means of their Brains, to conceive or to have conceived originally their notions of a distinctive and spiritual mind, and of a single and immaterial Deity. To this evidently difficult question two answers have been given.

1st. The metaphysicians reply. That the idea of our distinctive and individual mind is a simple consciousness, and may like all other simple ideas be the result of some central part of the Brain; and that the general idea of a deity is also a connate or inborn notion arising out of our organization.

2d. The Catholics or Christians reply. "We derive our knowledge of both mind and God only from that same course and series of Revelations and miracles by which we also know his attributes, and the mysteries of our religion—transubstantiation, and the sacraments."

Neither one nor the other of these explanations can prove generally satisfactory, the first is an assertion founded only on the belief of the individuals who maintain it; the second reply to the question will only be admitted by a large class of religious people, in the western world, called

Catholics or Christians, and its solution in this manner would be eradicated in the East.

The best answer therefore is that we know nothing about it, and that in the absence of that knowledge which we desire, we had better confine ourselves to the extension of that knowledge which we possess and can increase by observation; and that we own it to human nature not to agitate obscure questions, which the hypocritical and crafty have ever converted into systems of terror to enslave the ignorant and unwary. I believe you, Mr. Carlile, to be an honest, open defender of the cause you espouse, and I do sincerely wish those who put forth strange and unfounded dogmas possessed the same candid and disinterested motives*:

Your constant reader,

PHAINOMENOPHILOS.

April 7, 1825.

* Those who peruse Dr. Spurzheim's Lectures, should also read Dr. Gall's, whose mode of reasoning is far different. Report says, also, that Dr. Forster's Lectures will shortly be published; and we caution our readers against forming hastily any conclusions as to the religious tendency of the doctrine before all the evidence of its different supporters be fairly read and canvassed. See also Mr. Abernethy's "Essay on Gall and Spurzheim's System," London, 1819. And "Somato psychonologia or body, life and mind," Hunter and Co. London, 1823.

TO MR. RICHARD CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

SIR,

7, George Street, Hammersmith,

April 3, 1825.

Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.

I regret my correspondence with you was abruptly suspended, and I beg your acceptance of my best apologies for the seeming rudeness of not answering your private letter, if the former be pleasing, or the latter offensive to a philosopher, who, I believe, knows there can be neither merit nor disgrace in obeying the mandate of inevitable destiny*. As

* Lest this should be supposed to lead to immorality, I beg

I know your liberality will admit the evidence of medical science *in favour* of Revelation, as well as against it, I hope you will allow me the satisfaction of seeing the Essay, I herewith send, in the Republican.

I may observe "en passant," that Mr. Watson has not considered the resurrection attentively or he would not admit the possibility of it, as Christians believe, *simultaneous*. It is possible I may be Julius Cæsar; but if the matter once in his body be now in mine, we cannot both rise together. J. P. confounds a perpetual consciousness of identity, which is all we can understand by immortality of the soul, with resurrection of the body. His analogy of mercury supports my opinion. An ounce of mercury may be combined with (I forget the exact proportions, but say) an ounce of sulphuric acid, and thus form two ounces of sulphate of mercury. The salt may be reduced to its original state, and the *identical mercury* be combined with another acid to form two ounces of another salt. Suppose one ounce of mercury thus forms *successively* a dozen salts, two ounces of sulphate of mercury, two ounces of nitrate, &c. it is obvious, the twenty-four ounces of salts of mercury cannot exist together. The soul (THE MERCURY) may, if there be any such thing, for ever preserve its consciousness of identity, but a dozen bodies (THE SALTS) can never be formed of the mat-

leave to say, in brief, that I value men as I do horses, by their usefulness. Hence my loyalty, and respect for wealth†. The true philosophy is, not to disperse money, but to get it. I should have found this secret ten years since, but no matter—it is never too late to mend; and the way is very short—to spend less than you get.

† Yes; but I hope, that Mr. Webb makes a distinction between wealth accumulated by well applied industry, and wealth accumulated by sinecures, pensions, unnecessary places, wealth accumulated by the plunder of industry. He does not appear to me to have fully considered the sources of wealth. As to the word *loyalty*, it is sheer nonsense. Every man is *loyal*, who does not violate existing laws; and a King is *disloyal* if he does violate them. The man who makes a boast of *loyalty* must be ignorant on that head. There are such things as good and bad laws: and to substitute good for bad is all that any honest man means by change, or reformation, or radical reform, or revolution, or whatever other name prejudiced interest might have given to an expressed desire for change.

R. C.

ter of one. J. P. catches at the "destructive principles." Did not you (as all persons I shewed the Essay to did) understand, that they were elementary? Have I to plead guilty to the high crime of writing unintelligibly, or J. P. to that of stupidity? I await your judgment. An author is bound to find clearness—the reader, understanding. But if I must write "this is the red lion," I beg to inform you, that the destructive principles are elementary compounds. Opium is to be found neither in the poppy seed, the soil, nor in the air; and if J. P. will burn a pound of opium for a few hours, in a vessel as close as he pleases, to prevent any escape, I will eat it. With fish, flesh, and fowl, with man and beast, the fact will equally apply. But for the error of Mr. Watson, I should not trouble you with these observations. On first reading J. P's letter, I wrote a *seriatim* refutation of it, which I did not send for these reasons. Your notes (an admirable way of exposing error) rendered it unnecessary. J. P's assumption, that a man must be foolish or dishonest who could not see with his eyes, was more like parsonic than philosophic controversy. He staked no reputation against that which he assailed. *I have staked every thing, and lost it, CHEERFULLY*, except my talent, *si qua sit*, if I have any. But a man who defends established error *can* stake nothing but reputation for talent; friends, fortune, and every thing men value, are the rewards of his, even unsuccessful exertions; and I know the world too well to feel any thing but contempt for a man's writing who takes, like parsons, or attempts to take, something real and valuable from me without pledging an equivalent. The Priest's game of *taking* this world, for a *promise*, of another, is not to my taste.

I remain, Sir, your obedient humble Servant,

R. T. WEBB.

AN ANATOMICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, AND BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, BY, AND FROM, A VIRGIN.

By R. T. Webb, Esq. author of "*A Manual of Medicine, Surgery and Midwifery, for the use of Families and Officers. Dedicated to His Majesty.*" "*The Phrenologist, a Farce, with Songs,*" a "*Hudibrastic Ode, to the World Maker,*" a "*Speech to Parliament,*" &c. &c.

THE doctrine of the Immaculate Conception by, and the birth of Jesus CHRIST from, a virgin mother, has been an inexhaustible theme for the wit of infidels, who have repeatedly declared its absurdity and impossibility. With the absurdity of the Christian Trinity, I have nothing to do: it is not a part of Revelation that comes within the scope of Medical Science; but I shall incontestably demonstrate the possibility of the Immaculate Conception.

A virgin is a female of the human species who has not known man by lying with him. A Priest would say: the virgin lied with God, and not with man, and, therefore, she is a virgin according to the definition. Thus logic, syllogism, and sophistry disguise falsehood, instead of discovering truth. Thus, by the way: another specimen and I have done. Nothing is better than God; a leg of mutton is better than nothing; ergo, a leg of mutton is better than God; and so it is, in fact, as well as in logic, as far as we know him, when well cooked with caper-sauce. But, it is not thus, by mere logical sophistry, I mean to prove the possibility of the Immaculate Conception. I shall consider anatomically what a virgin is, and physiologically what conception and parturition are.

Christians may call this blasphemy if they think so, let them read no further. An intended, hypocritical or foolish judge may charge an ignorant and wicked jury to convict me: but they are the *real Blasphemers*, who, believing in an almighty ruler of the universe, dare to degrade him to the level of men, by attributing to him their parts, passions and actions. That men acquainted in the slightest degree,

with the structure of the World, should credit the absurdity, that its maker begot a child, is really surprising, and proves the power of early impression on weak minds, the majority of mankind. Oh, ye Radical leaders! is it your supreme wisdom, that such men be YOUR MASTERS: or YOUR DUPES?

Priests and bigots, who dare not defend their doctrines and practices honestly, but always fight under false colours, will, as they cannot charge me with sedition, call this essay indecent; and by a false charge, fix on me and on Blasphemy, the odium which morality awards to obscenity.

The "Morning Post" the other day, did a dirty trick of this sort, by heading, in capitals, the prosecution of Trust for obscenity, "Blasphemers and obscene publications," when there was not a word of Blasphemy mentioned by the prosecuting counsel. But this essay is not indecent and far less indelicate than many chapters of the Bible read in churches; less so than the marriage ceremony; less so than the Queen's Trial, and many others, all in a manner, forced daily on the attention of youth of both sexes. I instruct no one in licentiousness: no one can understand the professional language I use, who is not previously acquainted with the subject. If I had been disposed to injure morality, I would have done it effectually in the Manual of Medicine without suspicion, and which, not meddling with the clergy, they would not have objected to, had I made it as luscious as Fanny Hill. Priests care not for morals: it is tithes they tremble for. Not one of them opposed the publication of the Queen's Trial, with the Bishop's DECENT comments!

A Virgin, (so the English Anatomists say; the French cannot find it, but plenty may be seen in every Museum) has the pudenda closed by a circular foramen in its centre. This membrane is generally, but not always, broken in the first coition. The Bible orders a disgusting ceremony connected with this subject. An eminent accoucheur and lecturer on midwifery has twice found it entire in labour, and forming an obstruction to the passage of the child, which he was obliged to obviate by cutting it with a lancet¹. In one of

¹ My sweet Goaler once told me of a case of this kind occurring in this county and in the neighbourhood of Dorchester. His tale was thus: a young man was paying honourable address to a young woman, and, on a particular visit, they were romping together in a parlour, until both felt a strong inclination for closer

the cases, he had previously attended the husband, an Irishman, for a complaint that gave him an opportunity of knowing, that he was as well qualified to rupture the membrane, as his countrymen in general are; and it is well known that Erin is not solely famous for "Praters." Many circumstances may occasion this extraordinary anomaly, but, (and the observation is as old as Aristotle) the most frequent cause is coition soon after the menses have ceased, when the pudenda are so relaxed, that the Hymen gives way and stretches instead of breaking. But be the cause what it may, the fact proves the possibility of a virgin conception. Lest it be contended that the violation is in this case real, and that such females are technically and not morally virgins, I must reluctantly refer to animals to prove the possibility of conception without coition. Conception does not require the actual contact of the semen masculinum with the female; but a very subtile part, or vapour, called *aura seminis*, passes from the womb, by a small tube, to the female ovaria, or testicle as it might be called, and effects the impregnation of an egg which passes into the womb by the same passage². To prove this fact, bitches and other animals have

intercourse. But they were disturbed or some way prevented in the full gratification of the desire. However, the girl proved pregnant, and, as immaculate conceptions, were reformed in this country with other reformatations, now so offensive to Mr. Cobbett, notwithstanding the failure of Johanna Southcote and followers to revive them, such a plea, on the part of the girl, would not go down with the comparatively superstitious and silly people of Dorset. She protested against the charge of real intercourse, and justified herself by the soundness of her hymen; but all would not do; she was at last compelled to confess, that something like seminal contact had taken place. The Gaoler, from the learned suppositions of this neighbourhood, accounted for the impregnation by the bearing down of the genital vessel or vessels of the female to receive the semen masculinum at the very mouth of the pudenda; but Mr. Webb's physiological statements fully explain the matter, though both might be in some degree correct. Nor should I have ever repeated this circumstance in print but for the singular corroboration which it gives to Mr. Webb's argument for the practicability of an immaculate conception; though in my opinion, there is nothing *maculate*, nothing but what is *immaculate*, in impregnation from perfect intercourse. The contrary idea is a result of abominable priestcraft, bad education and bad customs.

R. C.

² Unless it be dropped into the cavity of the abdomen, where it

been taken at heat, and the male made to emit semen into a pipe so curved that it was impossible for any part but the vapour, or aura seminis, to pass into the womb, yet impregnation took place. An indisputable case of Immaculate Conception. We are not informed in what way the divine Impregnation took place: it might have been either of these, (and that is enough for me, as it proves the possibility of the fact) or some other.

The Bible says, that God made man in his own image; but does not say what relation the substance of man bears to that of God. In another place, the Bible contradicts this assertion, and says, "God has neither body nor parts of a body." To return good for evil to the parsons, I will endeavour to reconcile this contradiction, by suggesting that, probably, God (if there be one) is a spirit³ in the form of a man. If this be granted, it is clear he could impregnate, either by introducing the aura seminis of the penis itself without violating the virgin, for no Atheist will deny that a SPIRIT could pass without injury where an Irishman had done no mischief. Lest this should be deemed inconclusive, and to leave the real Anti-Christ, Carlile, no hole to creep out at, I will put a case, as the lawyers say. But I must first ask a question. Is it not surprising, that the Clergy should have blundered on Buonaparte, the Pope, and a dozen other Anti-Christ, and overlooked Paine and Carlile? I expect to be made an Arch-Bishop, *at least* for this discovery of the fulfilment of the prophecies, and for my other services in the cause of Christianity⁴.

it grows for months, dies, putrifies, and forming an immense abscess through the walls of the abdomen, comes away by piecemeal. So much for *contrivance*, *wisdom* and *goodness*! The mouths of the fallopian tubes open under the ovaria, but are not continuous with them; hence, the impregnated egg sometimes drops on one side, instead of into the tube, forming that dreadful disease an extra uterine foetus. If God had only had the *wisdom* and *goodness* to CONTRIVE a continuous connection between the two, this ACCIDENT could not happen. He either contrived the generative apparatus, or he did not. Contrivance is the Deist's Evidence of a God, and if it exist, is at the same time a proof that God is, so far from being omnipotent, &c., not merely fallible, but absolutely a careless bungler, to leave such an important process to chance. In my defence, I notice another evidence, of no design, or of a stupid or wicked one—labour pains.

³ And what is a Spirit, Mr. W.?

R. C.

⁴ You are too late, Mr. Webb. The advent of the real Anti-

Suppose a man should attempt to ravish a maid and be foiled in the attempt, is she not morally and physically a virgin, although he should emit on, or near, the pudenda? And, although the aura seminis should ascend to the ovaria and effect an impregnation? And, the possibility of this case having been demonstrated, the *possibility* of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION incontestably follows as a matter of course. I might greatly extend this argument by reference to the important and interesting physiology of the womb, but I do not wish to trespass on so sacred⁵ a subject any farther, than impartiality towards my Christian oppressors demands. And I shall not waste time in idle surmises as to the pleasure of God or of the virgin; or of the long abstinence of the former, or whether, as he made man in his own image, he be the father of other Virgin's children, that, like Nero, he has not thought proper to own.

I believe (that word, on which you persecute, ye Christians, implies doubt; you never say you *believe* two and two are four, because you *KNOW* it; you would not persecute a man for saying they were five; you never persecute known truth or error, but when *you doubt yourselves*, you endeavour to uphold your *staggering* FAITH, by fire and sword, the gaol and the gibbet") I *believe*, I say, that the Protestants do not *believe* in "the Virgin Mother of the God-born child:" the Catholics do, and the early fathers of the Church have written largely, learnedly and curiously to prove that Mary was still a virgin, after the birth of Christ⁶. Since a Virgin could conceive, this second point is scarcely worth disputing. In the case I have put, although

Christ was announced two years ago, in No. 1, Vol 7, of "The Republican." And that annunciation strengthened the faith of many a wavering Christian, as a sure fulfilment of prophecy, and of the divine inspiration of Peter and John.

R. C.

⁵ Why more sacred than any other part of the animal body? Silly idea!

R. C,

⁶ Saint Ambrose maintained that the Virgin Mary was impregnated through the ear. Other Fathers of the Church maintained that the Divine Semen passed into and through her, as water through a pipe, without communicating any divine, or receiving any human, quality. Such were the disputes of the primitive fathers of the Christian Church! How difficult it is to maintain error when disputed; but, alas! how easily swallowed!

R. C.

the Hymen might be ruptured in labour, every reasonable man would consider that the mother was really and truly, morally and physically a virgin, and what is more honourable, because, involuntarily on her part, a tried Virgin. An invaluable Jewel; a diamond that had passed the ordeal of the anvil, so often fatal to less perfect gems; and such *might have been* the Virgin Mary; for we have no evidence that she consented⁷, and in absence of proof, it is charitable and just, *gallant* and lawful, to presume innocence—that she consented neither to perfect violation of purity, nor to immaculate or philosophic impregnation. Virgin parturition is possible. The Hymen is the test of virginity, and *it is possible* the foramen might be enlarged to admit the passage of the child, and afterwards return to its usual dimensions; yet I must acknowledge, this is rather improbable, and that the Catholics err in supposing the mother of Jesus still has the physical formation of a maid. I am the more inclined to this opinion from the silence of the scriptures as to whether Joseph's respect for his predecessor, the Holy Ghost, induced him to abstain from marital rights, when he obeyed the angels command to "take unto thee Mary thy wife."

To conclude, the Immaculate Conception and birth is within the range of physical possibilities, and consequently subject to the power of God if there be one.

⁷ No? See Luke chap. i. ver. 38, and then say if that is not evidence of consent?

R. C.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!

As a proof of the tendency of the Christian Religion to degrade its votaries, we copy from "Letters from Spain by Don Leucadio Doblado," the following particulars of what is thought about the immaculate conception, in that ill-fated country. A sensible reader cannot fail to ejaculate a curse upon the Christian Religion, when he sees such stultifying effects, such utter absence of reason produced. Mr. Cobbett, too, may take another lesson, as to the consequence of his newly favoured Roman Catholic Religion, and Religious Houses. We shall make other extracts from this truly interesting and historically instructive volume.

The knock at the door, which, by-the-by, must be single, and by no means loud—in fact, a tradesman's knock in Lon-

don—is answered with a *Who is there?* To this question the stranger replies, “Peaceful people,” *Gente de paz*—and the door is opened without farther enquiries. Peasants and beggars call out at the door, “Hail, spotless Mary!” *Ave, Maria purissima!* The answer, in that case, is given from within in the words *Sin pecado concebida*: “Conceived without sin.” This custom is a remnant of the fierce controversy, which existed about three hundred years ago, between the Franciscan and the Dominican friars, whether the Virgin Mary had or not been subject to the penal consequences of original sin. The Dominicans were not willing to grant any exemption; while the Franciscans contended for the propriety of such a privilege. The Spaniards, and especially the Sevillians, with their characteristic gallantry, stood for the honour of our Lady, and embraced the latter opinion so warmly, that they turned the watch-word of their party into the form of address, which is still so prevalent in Andalusia. During the heat of the dispute, and before the Dominicans had been silenced by the authority of the Pope, the people of Seville began to assemble at various churches, and, sallying forth with an emblematic picture of the *sinless* Mary, set upon a sort of standard surmounted by a cross, they paraded the city in different directions, singing a hymn to the *Immaculate Conception*, and repeating aloud their beads or rosary. These processions have continued to our times, and they constitute one of the nightly nuisances of this place. Though confined at present to the lower classes, they assume that characteristic importance and overbearing spirit, which attaches to the most insignificant religious associations in this country. Wherever one of these shabby processions presents itself to the public, it takes up the street from side to side, stopping the passengers, and expecting them to stand uncovered in all kinds of weather, till the standard is gone by. These awkward and heavy banners are called, at Seville, *Sinpecados*, that is, “sinless,” from the theological opinion in support of which they were raised.

The Spanish government, under Charles III., shewed the most ludicrous eagerness to have the *sinless purity* of the Virgin Mary added by the Pope to the articles of the Roman Catholic faith. The court of Rome, however, with the cautious spirit which has at all times guided its spiritual politics, endeavoured to keep clear from a stretch of authority, which, even some of their own divines would be ready to question; but splitting, as it were, the difference with theological precision, the censures of the church were levelled against such as should have the boldness to assert that the Virgin Mary had derived any taint from “her great ancestor;” and, having personified the *Immaculate Conception*, it was declared, that the Spanish dominions in Europe and America were under the protecting influence of that mysterious event. This declaration diffused universal joy over the whole nation. It

was celebrated with public rejoicings on both sides of the Atlantic. The king instituted an order under the emblem of the immaculate Conception—a woman dressed in white and blue; and a law was enacted, requiring a declaration, upon oath, of a firm belief in the *Immaculate Conception*, from every individual, previous to his taking any degree at the universities, or being admitted into any of the corporations, civil and religious, which abound in Spain. This oath is administered even to mechanics upon their being made free of a Guild*.

Here, however, I must break off, for fear of making this packet too large for the confidential conveyance, which alone I could trust without great risk of finishing my task in one of the cells of the Holy Inquisition. I will not fail, however, to resume my subject as soon as circumstances will permit me.

* *On the Devotion of the Spaniards to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.*

THE history of the transactions relative to the disputes on the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, even when confined to those which took place at Seville, could not be compressed within the limits of one of the preceding letters. Such readers, besides, as take little interest in subjects of this nature, would probably have objected to a detailed account of absurdities, which seem at first sight scarcely to deserve any notice. Yet there are others to whom nothing is without interest which depicts any peculiar state of the human mind, and exhibits some of the innumerable modifications of society. Out of deference, therefore, to the first, we have detached the following narrative from the text of Doblado's Letters, casting the information we have collected from the Spanish writers into a note, the length of which will, we hope, be excused by those of the latter description.

The dispute on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin began between the Dominicans and Franciscans as early as the thirteenth century. The contending parties stood at first upon equal ground; but "the merits of faith and devotion" were so decidedly on the side of the Franciscans, that they soon had the Christian mob to support them, and it became dangerous for any Divine to assert that the *Mother of God* (such is the established language of the Church of Rome) had been, like the rest of mankind, involved in original sin. The oracle of the Capitol allowed, however, the disputants to fight out their battles without shewing the least partiality, till public opinion had taken a decided turn,

In 1613, a Dominican, in a sermon preached at the cathedral of Seville, threw out some doubts on the Immaculate Conception. This was conceived to be an insult not only to the Virgin Mary, but to the community at large; and the populace was kept with difficulty from taking summary vengeance on the offender and his convent. Zúñiga, the annalist of Seville, who published his work in 1677, deems it a matter of Christian forbearance not to consign the names of the preacher and his convent to the execration of posterity. But if the civil and ecclesiastical authorities exerted themselves for the protection of the offenders, they were also the first to promote a series of expiatory rites, which might avert the anger of the Patroness, and make ample reparation to her insulted honour. Processions innumerable paraded the streets, proclaiming the original purity of the Virgin Mother; and *Miguél del Cid*, a *Sevil-*

lian poet of that day, was urged by the Archbishop to compose the Spanish hymn, "Todo el Mundo en general," which, though far below mediocrity, is still nightly sung at Seville by the associations called Rosarios, which have been described in Doblado's Letters.*

The next step was to procure a decision of the Pope in favour of the *Immaculate Conception*. To promote this important object two commissioners were dispatched to Rome, both of them dignified clergymen, who had devoted their lives and fortunes to the cause of the Virgin Mary.

After four years of indescribable anxiety the long wished-for decree, which doomed to silence the opponents of Mary's original innocence, was known to be on the point of passing the seal of the *Fisherman*†, and the *Sevillians* held themselves in readiness to express their unbounded joy the very moment of its arrival in their town. This great event took place on the 22d. of October 1617, at ten o'clock P. M. "The news, says Zuñiga, produced an universal stir in the town. Men left their houses to congratulate one another in the streets. The fraternity of the *Nazarenes* joining in a procession of more than six hundred persons, with lighted candles in their hands, sallied forth from their church, singing the hymn in honour of *Original Purity*. Numerous bonfires were lighted, the streets were illuminated from the windows and terraces, and ingenious fireworks were let off in different parts of the town. At midnight the bells of the cathedral broke out into a general chime, which was answered by every parish church and convent; and many persons in masks and fancy dresses having gathered before the archbishop's palace, his grace appeared at the balcony, moved to tears by the devout joy of his flock. At the first peal of the bells all the churches were thrown open, and the hymns and praises offered up in them lent to the stillness of night the most lively sounds of the day."

A day was subsequently fixed when all the authorities were to take a solemn oath in the Cathedral, to believe and assert the *Immaculate Conception*. An endless series of processions followed to thank Heaven for the late triumph against the unbelievers. In fact, the people of Seville could not move about, for some time, without forming a religious procession. "Any boy," says a contemporary historian "who, going upon an errand, chose to strike up the hymn *Todo el Mundo*, was sure to draw after him a train, which from one grew up into a multitude; for there was not a gentleman, clergyman, or friar, who did not join and follow the chorus which he thus happened to meet in the streets."

Besides these religious ceremonies, shows of a more worldly character were exhibited. Among these was the Moorish equestrian game, called, in Arabic, *El Jeerid*, and in Spanish *Ceñas*, from the reeds which, instead of javelins, the cavaliers dart at each other as they go through a great variety of graceful and complicated evolutions on horseback.‡ *Fiestas*

* Letter I. p. 23.

† *Sigillum* or *annulus Piscatoris*, the great seal of the Popes.

‡ Gentlemen of the first rank, who are members of the associations called *Maestranzas*, perform at these games on the King's birth-day, and other public festivals. Horsemanship was formerly in great estimation among the Andalusian gentry, who joined in a variety of amusements connected with that art. Such was the *Parejas de Hachas*, a game performed by night, at which the riders bore lighted torches. When Phillip the Fourth visited Seville, in 1654, one hundred gentlemen, each attended by two grooms, all with torches in their hands, ran races before the king. This was the only amusement which, according to the established notions, could be permitted in Lent.

Reales, or bull-fights, where gentlemen enter the arena, were also exhibited on this occasion. To diversify, however, the spectacle, and indulge the popular taste, which requires a species of comic interlude, called *Morgiganga*, a dwarf, whose diminutive limbs required to have the stirrups fixed on the flap of the saddle, mounted on a milk-white horse, and attended by four negroes of gigantic stature, dressed in a splendid oriental costume, fought with one of the bulls, and drove a full span of the lance into the animal's body—a circumstance which was deemed too important to be omitted by the historiographers of Seville.

The most curious and characteristic of the shows was, however, an allegorical tournament, exhibited at the expense of the company of silk-weavers, who, from the monopoly with the Spanish Colonies, had attained great wealth and consequence at that period. It is thus described, from the records of the times, by a modern Spanish writer.

"Near the Puerta del Perdón (one of the gates of the cathedral), a platform was erected, terminating under the altar dedicated to the Virgin, which stands over the gate.* Three splendid seats were placed at the foot of the altar, and two avenues railed in on both sides of the platform to admit the Judges, the challenger, the supporters or seconds, the marshal, and the adventurers. Near one of the corners of the stage was pitched the challenger's tent of black and brown silk, and in it a seat covered with black velvet. In front stood the figure of an apple-tree bearing fruit, and hanging from its boughs, a target, on which the challenge was exposed to view.

"At five in the afternoon, the Marshal, attended by his Adjutant, presented himself in the lists. He was followed by four children, in the dress used to represent angels, with lighted torches in their hands. Another child personating Michael the Archangel, was the leader of a second group of six angels, who were the bearers of the prizes—a Lamb and a Male Infant. The Judges, Justice and Mercy appeared last of all, and took their appointed seats.

"The sound of drums, fifes, and clarions, announced soon after, the approach of another group, composed of two savages, of gigantic dimensions with large clubs on their shoulders, eight torch-bearers in black, and two infernal Furies, and, in the centre, the challenger's shield-bearer, followed by the challenger's supporter or second, dressed in black and gold, with a plume of black and yellow feathers. This band having walked round the stage, the second brought the challenger out of the tent, who dressed uniformly with his supporter, appeared wielding a lance twenty-five hands, in length †.

The following is a list of the Adventurers, their attendants or torch-bearers, and supporters or seconds:—

Adam	Attendants 6 Clowns	Seconds—	{ Hope and Innocence.
Cain	6 Infernal Furies		Eury.
Abraham	6 Dwarfs †, three Angels in the ha- bit of Pilgrims, and Isaac	}	Faith.

* The reader must be aware that this was an imitation of a foot tournament, an amusement as frequent among the ancient Spanish knights as the jousts on horseback. It is called in the Spanish Chronicles *Torneo de a pié*.

† Though the Spanish writer has forgotten to mention the allegory of the challenger, it is evident, from the sequel, that he was intended to represent *Sin*.

‡ Dwarfs were formerly very common among the servants of the Spanish

Job	6 Pages	Patience.
David	6 Squires	Repentance.
Jeroboam	4 Jews	Idolatry.
Abab	12 Squires	Covetousness
John the Baptist	12 Squires	{ Divine Love { and Grace.

"The dresses (continues the historian) were all splendid, and suited to the characters.

"The Adventurers engaged the challenger in succession, and all were wounded by the first stroke of his enormous lance. In this state they drew their swords, and fought with various success, some conquering the common enemy, while others yielded to his superior force. None, however, distinguished himself so much as the Baptist, who regardless of the wound he had received at the first onset, and being armed with fresh weapons by *Grace*, beat the adversary in every succeeding rencounter. His extraordinary success was rewarded with a seat near the Judges, and the Lamb was awarded him as a prize.

"After this, the Marshal and his Adjutant, followed by *Grace* and *Divine Love*, left the stage. In a short time they re-appeared, followed by twelve youths, as torch-bearers, the seven Virtues* personated by children from four to five years of age, and nine Angels, as representatives of the nine hierarchies. Two squires attended each of the Virtues and Angels; the whole train being closed by *Grace* and *divine Love*, supporting the last adventurer, a beautiful child seven years old, who, as intended to represent the Holy Virgin, was more splendidly dressed than the rest, in a suit of sky-blue and white, sprinkled with golden stars, the hair flowing down the shoulders in curls, and held round the head by a twelve-starred diadem.

"When the combatants faced each other, the challenger could not conceal his trepidation. The female Adventurer, on the other hand, would not use the lance with which she had entered the lists; for it bore the words DAUGHTER OF ADAM, in a banderole which hung from it. Having thrown away that weapon, she received another from the seconds, with the inscription DAUGHTER OF THE FATHER. At this moment the challenger darted his lance; but in his fear and confusion, he could not touch his adversary, while the heroine, on the contrary, taking an unerring aim at his breast, brought him instantly upon his knees; and the victory was completed with too other lances bearing the mottoes—MOTHER OF THE SON—SPOUSE OF THE HOLY GHOST. Unhurt by her adversary, she had now laid him on the ground, and placed her foot and sword upon his neck, amidst a shout of universal acclamation. The Judges awarded her the *Child Jesus*, as a prize, and seated her above all in a throne. Next under the Virgin took their seats *Divine Love*, *Grace*, *Michael* and *John the Baptist*, and a general tournament ensued, in which all the other combatants engaged. The tournament being ended, the challenger and his second retired through the left avenue. The rest of the actors conducted the victor, through that on the right, attended by one hundred and forty torch-bearers, and a band of musicians singing her triumphal hymn, which was echoed by the immense concourse."—*Compendio Historico de Sevilla por Don Fermin Arana de Varflora* (Padre Valderrama) p. 89, et seq.

nobility. But it is not easy to guess for what reason they were allotted to Abraham, on this occasion.

* The Spanish Catechism enumerates seven vices and seven opposite virtues.

THE INDIAN'S LETTERS, No. IV.

DEITY CONSIDERED.

ACCORDING to your wishes I shall write concerning the Deity, or, more properly speaking, the belief in an Omnipotent being. This being of the mind is so wrapped up in gloom, terror, and consequence, that, we approach him in thought with trembling and diffidence; and, as we are taught, we think it damnable to doubt, for a moment, his existence, or to question his extremest cruelty fraud and injustice. Hence we scarcely come to this investigation with much more than half of our reasoning powers; the rest are absorbed by a legitimate superstition, begotten in youth on our ignorance, matured by precept and example, and confirmed by surrounding bigotry. Let us sever this chain, and, with a modest assurance, undauntedly approach the author of our being, as a good and dutiful son would approach a kind and indulgent parent.

If such a being does exist, we feel confident, that, he will not be offended at the liberty we take in using the reason he has been graciously pleased to bestow upon us; nor accuse us of blasphemy, if we even doubt his existence or hesitate to credit his imputed attributes. For, if he pleased, he could reveal himself to our perfect satisfaction in a moment, or annihilate us for our temerity. Since, then, he leaves us to doubt, to argue and to reason, it is very probable, that, in some future period, there will be little argument and no doubt on the subject. Reason and sense will never bewilder themselves with incomprehensible metaphysics, in which numberless theses, cases and arguments commence und terminate in absolute conjecture. Religious impostors, when they come forth in some future day, to preach repentance to sinners, for the good of themselves, will only be considered as madmen, fools or knaves; and, in either case, a cell, some straw and bread and water will act equally as a punishment for crime and a restorative to sanity. Indeed, when we come to consider the thing in a clear light, these very fools, knaves and madmen are proofs against a divinity. But one of the strongest arguments for the non-existence of an omnipotent deity is, *the existence of hypocrisy*. For why should an all wise, and all just being permit a villain to deceive men in his name; when, it is only the respect they have

for the deity himself, which permits the imposition. This, and the absurd, stupid doctrines which the priests of every sect preach up, are almost enough to destroy even the firm belief of a devout deist. Is it not surprising, that such things exist in spite of sense, reason, truth and experience? Is it not surprising, that fanatics, who are always absolutely madmen, shall make fools of men of sense, or, at least, of apparent sense. At times, I feel myself struck with something which puts on the semblance of truth, and which I entertain for a time, until sober reflection and reason determines against it. Then away goes my creed, without leaving a sign of its ever having been. This argues nothing. I trouble no one with the vain cogitation, and, to myself, it only shews me my ignorance and want of solid foundation for thought. What was thought once infallible, the old established, irresistible argument for deity, is now nearly exploded, or like a conquered battery which defended the town now turned against the citadel; I mean those which follow, which I put into different forms, the better to comprehend the strength and meaning of the axiom. The argument is meant for a silencer and to prove, at first sight, the identity of a God: as if man could prove by a few words what God intends to keep an eternal secret.

Nothing—never could produce something. Without a something nothing could ever have been. Without a creator, nothing could ever have been created. From nothing—nothing will ever proceed to eternity. If so, and the case is clear that it must be so, then omnipotence must have had a beginning and a creator. For, nothing could never create its nonentity into everlasting and unreducible matter. This, I presume, is a silencer too. And he must think deeper than I can, who will attempt to explain the mystery farther. But in reality, there is no mystery in the case; we are all here, and we wonder like fools where we came from: we find this world under our feet, and we wonder who made it. We have a certain account, or rather a number of different accounts, when it was made, and we all again wonder how old it is. Then, we think, some great Geni must have made it, and we wonder who he is, or what he is like. All the old women and children in the parish can tell you he is like a man. Though some very sage philosophers have said he was like a fish, others an ox, others a monkey or baboon, some a sun, a moon, a star, an elephant, a crocodile, a shark, an egg, a stock, a stick, a stone, a tree, until, at last, some say the world is God and every creature in it a Godling.

All this argues only the profound ignorance of man, and the frailty of human nature. But here we must not forget the impudent lying assertion of those who have dared to say, that they have seen the deity face to face and conversed with him as with a man.

The monsters, tree, plant, ox, monkey, or man, then, comprehend the great Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, incomprehensible Almighty Nothing, this inconceivable being, who, without being any thing, created every thing, is in every thing; without being perceivable to sight or feeling, is every where, and only reveals himself to one man, once in two or three thousand years. But, in the interim, plays at slaughtering men and destroying them by universal and partial deluges, by earthquakes, storms, tempests, thunder, lightning, plague, famine, war, battle, murder, massacre, and an infinity of other means, whereby, in the room of being merciful, good, and just, he proves himself to be the most resentful, capricious, cruel, unjust tyrant that even infernal cunning could conceive, or infernal agency produce. The truth is, there is no such God as the priests of any sect or creed preach; and if there is an almighty power in existence, he must be quite a different being from any thing that men have endeavoured to conceive. It is said, that all nations, rude, savage, and civilized, have an idea of a God: and this is called a proof of the being of a divinity. But this is not true, in the first place, and, if it were a fact, would prove nothing; for, all their ideas are imperfect and no two of them agree in any one instance, except some little relation as to his general character of a terrible, resentful, and implacable tyrant, agreeing in principle with a Marius, a Sylla, a Tiberius, or a Nero; still, however, divesting these of any little particle of humanity, which might have been in their character. Such Gods deserve not a place in the universe. One thing, we can see very plain, and that is, that all the God-makers have been a set of cruel, ignorant, stupid, bigoted fools and knaves. The unparalleled confusion of the Athanasian Creed is a full proof of this; none else is necessary. Repeatedly have the Materialists told the creed-mongers, that they would believe directly, if they, the creed-mongers, would explain, or demonstrate, in any degree, their incomprehensible divinities. I, for one, say plainly, I cannot believe in what I cannot comprehend, and further, I do believe every man, who says he believes in what he does not comprehend, to be a base hypocrite and an unpardonable liar, a man, who is made up of every kind of falsehood and

treachery, a man in whom society can place no trust, a man whose whole business is to deceive the credulous and to betray those he deceives, and whose tremendous Idol, who rides in the whirlwind, lives in the tempest, speaks in thunder, and breathes blood and desolation, sanctifies each action, commends his deceit, approves all his atrocities, and is only wroth when he discovers a trait of humanity in the wretch who adores him. All the Idols of mankind are vindictive, capricious, cruel, revengeful, easily raised to anger, and their fury only to be allayed by blood, slaughter, fire, general ruin, and the destruction of thousands of the weak creatures whom they have formed. This is the character of the Great Idols, Brama, Odin, Johs, Foh, Moloch, Jehovah and many others. The Greek Jupiter seems to be a being of greater benignity than the others; yet he is nothing better than a parricide, usurper and libertine monarch, for ever committing rapes, adulteries, and murders. Do not such Gods authorise us to doubt, or rather, compel us to renounce every idea of a divinity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that, if there existed an almighty, allwise, creator and ruler of the universe, he would not permit such wretches to profane his name, deceive mankind; and render his own being doubtful and detestable; for, we hold it as a maxim, that omitting to do good is a committing of evil: and from what we see and learn by our experience in this world, we must absolutely conclude, that, if there is a God, as they say and pretend to believe, he must be a very unjust being. Devout deists pretend to see a first cause in the surrounding firmament, and infer, that, without something, nothing could have been; yet they make out the great architect to be a mighty nothing, which they call an immaterial spirit, omnipresent, pervading all matter and occupying all space, existing in all things; yet undiscoverable, intangible, indescribable and incomprehensible. This is the cant and cry of the deceived and the deceivers, and, in plain terms, amounts to this, that there is no such being; or, if there is, we know nothing about him. The idea of a spirit, without form and void of matter, creating something out of nothing, composing worlds for his own amusement, and destroying them for his spite, is unaccountably inconsistent and ridiculous, and savours strongly of monastic conception and monkish puerility. It is strange that the character of the Gods in general is that of the worst tyrants amongst men. Delighting in flattery, homage and supplication, irritable, unappeaseable, sacrificing every thing to their lusts and resentments, childish and fickle in their

friendships, curious, cautious, and jealous in their dispositions, and most detestable in all their proceedings. These may be reasons and convincing arguments with some folks, in favour of a divinity; but I candidly confess, that they nearly shake my belief to pieces; nor have I ever yet met with one convincing reason, to hang a proof on; nor is it possible where all is only conjecture, and where reality can never be established. How came we here? How came all things to be? They triumphantly ask, as if this was a full solution of the important question. I answer directly and candidly, I do not know, more than you, and you know no more about it than the dullest ass on the common. Aye, but, they tell me, they do know and they believe. Here I doubt their veracity and question their authority; for, that which makes them to believe, fills me with infinite doubt and leads me to decide directly against all their doctrines, creeds divinities and the whole immaterial world: nor shall I ever believe in any thing without a positive demonstration. So much for the present on this incomprehensible subject.

I remain thine,

SHEBAGO.

THE INDIAN'S LETTERS. No. V.

From Shebago to Honopogaten.

RELIGION CONSIDERED.

FRIEND of my bosom, let us let the Deity (if there is one) rest under the shadow of his impenetrable secret! All research concerning him and the soul's immortality ends in gloomy doubts and vain conjectures. Let us, therefore, argue and reason about what we know, where we can decide without doubting and draw conclusions from experience and example. Let us expose to the detestation of mankind, the follies, errors and crimes of infatuated hypocrites, whose superstition, bigotry, cruelty, and perseverance, in courses of flagrant injustice and oppression, render their name a bye word; for the cruelty of a priest is become proverbial; his pride, avarice, and duplicity are incontestible marks of his character, and these are in numberless instances heightened by cringing baseness, depraved morals and unutterable bes-

tiality. Their means of injuring society are manifold. Their weapons, the Bible and Testaments, the holy and sacred scriptures. They wield the thunders of the pulpit and the irresistible sword of civil power. The poor man lies naked and defenceless before them, and their usurped power and authority is nearly equal to that of the ideal omnipotent Idol which they create, adore and profane. Religion is their profession, and they say it is for the benefit of man. Let us then, as it is, if not *of* man, at least, *for* him, examine this divine benefit and see how and how much it contributes to our happiness. Let us come to this question with candour and calmness, and go through the investigation with Indian integrity, keeping truth before our eyes and justice on our right hand.

The three great leaders of the known sects of religions, of the present day, are Moses, Jesus Christ and Mahomet. To these, we might add Zoroaster, Bramah and Foh. All these people, Jesus Christ excepted, have produced books, which their priests say are the word of God. Each of them honours all the rest with the ready made epithets of impostor, infidel, deceiver, blasphemer, &c. and vouches for his own word of God being the only true one. If we decide in favour of any of these books, which were evidently written for the express purpose of abetting impostors to deceive, enslave, and impose on mankind, if *better* can be where all are extremely bad, we would give a decided preference to the book of the Arabian prophet. And candour must allow, that it is an approved abridgement of the Jewish Bible and Christian Testament. But it does not appear, that either the daring Arab, or his assistant, Sergius, the apostate monk, were any way acquainted with the Zend-Avesta. As the chimera of the egg is neglected, the Mosaic Cosmogony adopted, the contending powers of light and darkness dispensed with, Ismael and Hagar the Abraham and Sarah of the devout mussulman, and predestination and fatalism the perfection of their religious and civil code. Zoroaster's summum-bonum, had they known it, would have been had in requisition, in some shape or other; for all religion, and all priestcraft, is contained in the space of a few lines, and forms the peroration to the divine Persian's miraculous code. Listen to the preceptory exhortation of the holy Zoroaster. After recapitulating his precepts, rules and orders he continues. After all these things, still the way to obtain happiness eternal is, to sow a field of corn, plant a tree, and get a woman with child; but, performing all these is useless, un-

less you pay the priest his due!!! Well, said Zoroaster: But now, leaving all these absurd religions false creeds, foolish superstitions and ridiculous ceremonies out of the case, let us examine the *pure* Christian doctrine, where no falsehood invades, no absurdity appears, no vain, unintelgible cant is found; where every thing is true, that the priest says; where charity is unbounded, and the remission of sins, the unalienable property of every true believer in the faith. There a man has something to brag of. A child may be born in sin, brought up in sin, and sin on for sixty or seventy years; he may wallow on through a long life, in every vice and wickedness that his frail and foul nature can aid him to accomplish; yet washing in the blood of the lamb makes him as white as snow. Curious effect of lamb's blood? This is not strange, we know, blood is a fine thing for taking out stains! This, I suppose, is the reason we have so many reprobate old christians; as they have bargained for a wash in the lamb's blood, they may wade on through the puddle of guilt as they like, being confident of a purification at a moment's warning. Nobody will pretend to say, that the christian doctrine exceeds all others in absurdity; for, here, in this hard working country, they excuse many thousand men from all other duty, to preach up the truth and simplicity of the christian doctrine, and pay them annually £8,000,000. sterling for *performing this service*. These are strong and convincing arguments in favour of christianity; but they have others far more powerful. They tell you, if you do not believe every word the priest says, and all that is printed in his book, that, you will be damned to all eternity; and if you pretend to reason or dispute the point with the priests, who are often dull, stupid proud bigots, they will drag you before a justice, who is very often a priest, and try you for treason, sedition and blasphemy against their sovereign lord the King: making it out that Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, in whose blood they wash one another white, the Almighty God their sovereign lord the King, the law of the land, the Jew's Bible, and the Christian's Testament, are all one and the same thing. Then they send a gang of ruffians to plunder your house, turn your wife and family into the street to starve, and send yourself to jail, to rot, for asking a question which they cannot answer. This, indeed, if transacted in Turkey, in Persia, in China, or any where else but in *this land of freedom, the classic ground of liberty, the glory of the world and envy of surrounding nations*, would be

deemed the grand climax of despotic oppression and injustice; but here it is all fair and right. I have in a former letter, given you an outline of this immaculate religion: what I have not done there I shall here attempt.

It is a common rule, with all jugglers, to leave off performing and quit the place, as soon as the secret of their art is discovered, or the nature of their tricks understood. The people are no longer pleased; for their pleasure lay in the deception; and he, who was thought to be a magician or great necromancer, is found out to be but an ignorant clown, whose whole art importance and merit lay in an impudent, staring countenance, and a few monkey like slight of hand tricks. This is the case with all the legerdemain gangs, except the staunch sons of the Church. The juggling priests persist in performing, after the audience are satiated, and continue to play off their stale tricks, when most of the spectators are their superiors in the science. The reason is plain, they are paid for preaching, whether the audience attend or not. One day in seven, in honour of an imaginary God, they declare war against an imaginary devil, and with long grave faces, in loud and audible voices, repeat a regular set of prayers, sing a set of unmeaning songs, and read a dull, dry lecture, of which nobody recollects a word, after he is out of the church door, and which in general, has no application to any thing in human life. This they call performing divine service. Thus they devoutly acknowledge God, one day in seven, and duly and truly serve the devil all the rest of the week. I have, in this letter, said, that they cry up the purity and simplicity of the christian doctrine. as to its being pure, I do not know what they mean by *pure*, in this sense, but as to simple, their religion is any thing but *simple*. The word *simple* means any thing plain, natural, easy to be perceived or understood, any thing seen at first sight, and comprehended with ease by any capacity; it may admit of elegance, judgment, and refined taste, be familiar yet pleasing, common yet chaste, and though on a level with all capacities, yet above improvement. Such is my definition of the article simplicity. Now, if the Christian creed agrees with this, I am satisfied, that the religion is simple. But so different is the case, that, the Cretan Labyrinth was a strait passage compared to it, and the romances of Bayardo, Ariosto and the Arabian Tales, more easy of belief, than the sacred canons of the christian church. I believe, says the apparently devout hypocrite, the christian priest, in one God, never made, who is, nothing, yet is,

three Gods; who made this world six thousand years ago, and two thousand years after destroyed it, and all things in it, except eight persons, being one family, and a pair of all other animals, in a ship called an ark. That, two thousand years after, this gloomy, triatic God begot himself over again, into a son, on another man's wife, who was a virgin. That this son, who was God himself, had himself put to death, to appease the wrath of his vengeful father, who was himself, that he was crucified, dead and buried, that he descended into hell, that he rose again and ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of God the father, who is himself, that he has been coming again for 1800 years, and will come at or about two thousand years from the time of his nativity, to judge the quick and the dead, that he will take a few up to heaven, of whom I am one, and that he will send all the rest to hell for ever and ever. I believe in the resurrection of this my body, in propria persona, and that I shall hold conversation with saints and angels through eternity. This is quite simple you see, is equally pure, and, I congratulate him, who has powers of belief equal to the task of believing it, The vile imposters, the Mahometans, will not believe this, and they will be all damned for rejecting such a pure, simple doctrine. But the pleasantest part is, to hear the Christian doctors disputing gravely about the truth and true meaning of scripture passages. One maintaining, that God means this, and the other, that he means that, by his divine precepts, till they grow into a holy rage and reciprocally damn each other to hell for ever, for want of faith and understanding; hence they are divided into numerous sects, all of which devoutly consign each other to hell and the wrath of God for ever! From these scisms, we are taught to despise their tenets, to dispute their authority, and to conclude the whole to be a bungling fabrication. It is worth observation, how ready, alert and keen the Christian priests, doctors, and prelates are, in detecting the frauds, impostors and errors of all other religions but their own. They often display great learning, and sometimes science, in bringing to light the dark shades of paganism, in decrying the superstitions of poor unlearned uncivilized Indians. They shew themselves profound when arguing with African Negroes and scouting the great God Mumbo Jumbo; Jaggernaut falls before them, and even our Kitchimanitoe hides himself in his pure blue sky from their reach. They explain all the fraudulent mysteries of the ancient oracles, and shew, that Jupiter, Saturn,

and Mars were bad men and worse kings, that Apollo was the sun, Hercules strength, Minerva wisdom, Juno the air, Cynthia the Moon. They prove, that the Oaks of Dodona were perforated, and that the deceitful lying old priests spake out of them, in double meaning, or no meaning verses: that the Druids were a set of ignorant impostors, who were at once accusers, judges and executioners of the people whom they deceived, abused and blind-folded, granting them life and property, just as they pleased. How singular it is that they see all other errors, yet are blind to their own! Were they not the most stupid or the most vile sots in existence, they must see their own downfall at hand and endeavour, by prudence, to make it easy; but no, they must fall fighting and the sooner the better.

Thine,

SHEBAGO.

**COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE RIGHT
HONOURABLE THE EARL OF ELDON, LORD
HIGH CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND.**

MY LORD, Dorchester Gaol, April 15, 1825.
As I have ceased to be, if ever I was, a party man, now knowing nothing less than country in my political efforts, I select your Lordship, so noted for candour, to receive a request, that you will be pleased to present my first petition to the Right Honourable the House of Lords for free discussion.

I am, My Lord,

Your Lordship's very humble Servant,
RICHARD CARLILE.

To the Right Honourable the
Earl of Eldon.

*Copy of a petition sent to the Right Honourable the Lords
Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled.*

The humble petition of Richard Carlile, for free discussion, in the sixth year of an imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, for having dared to be a free bookseller, sheweth:—

That discussion and knowledge are synonymous terms, and

that to petition the legislature to sanction the most free discussion, is but to ask it to aid in the extension of human knowledge.

That the common objection to free discussion is its tendency to undermine existing institutions; but your petitioner humbly submits to your Right Honourable House, that discussion cannot injure any institution but such as is founded upon old error; and so great is the change in human knowledge, that no institution, a thousand years old, can now be shown to be free from error. Truth cannot be altered by the most free discussion, nor can political rectitude receive aught but strength from it. It will triumph over all mere party feeling and reduce the community to unanimity in whatever tends to the general welfare.

Your Right Honourable House is therefore humbly petitioned, to protect free discussion from the pains and penalties which now surround it, and which are now suffered, in positive infliction, by your humble petitioner and six others, and, in the terror of anticipation by many others, indeed, by all, who aspire to an extension of their own with the general knowledge.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Dorchester Gaol, April 16, 1825.

COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE RIGHT
HONOURABLE ROBERT PEEL, SECRETARY
OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

SIR,

Dorchester Gaol, April 16, 1825.

REFLECTING upon your new Jury Bill, I presume to suggest an improvement. In the old mode of forming Special Juries, it was the custom to nominate 48 and to have 24 subsequently rejected between plaintiff and defendant, leaving 24 to be summoned to attend the trial. I understand, that the only change in your bill is, that the 48 shall be nominated by ballot, instead of by the discretion of the Master of the Crown Office. I see two evils attending the form under your amendment.

1st. It is unnecessary and unfair, after a fair ballot, to have a subsequent selection or rejection. Twenty-four only

should be ballotted for. This would save much trouble and anxiety to all parties concerned, and exclude the possibility of much tampering and intrigue.

2d. Neither plaintiff nor defendant should have a knowledge of the names of the persons ballotted, if any satisfactory mode could be devised to form the Jury in their absence.

I beg to observe, as a further amendment, that a special jury is not necessary in a political case, particularly now that ordinary housekeepers are so comparatively well educated, not to say, that political trials can scarcely be deemed wise, under a powerful government; a special jury cannot be considered free from suspicious interference on the part of the government, whose influence is so extensive: and can only be considered fair upon the ground on which it originated, or that of both parties consenting to a more select jury, than might assemble under the common formation.

If I understand what fairness is, in the formation of an ordinary jury, it is, that neither plaintiff nor defendant shall have a knowledge of the persons likely to form the Jury, until twelve are sworn in the Jury Box; thus to leave no idea of their having been tampered with: and that no person shall have a positive knowledge to day of being called on to morrow to act as a Juror in any particular case, thus every Juror must enter the Jury Box as free from bias as it is possible for the human mind to be.

I am, Sir, your humble Servant,

R. CARLILE.
HONORABLE ROBERT ELLIS, SECRETARY
OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

Sir, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th inst. in relation to the proposed amendment to the Bill for the reform of the Jury. In the old mode of forming Special Juries, it was the custom to nominate 25 and to have 12 sworn. I have frequently rejected between plaintiff and defendant, leaving 12 to be summoned to attend the trial. I understand, that the only change in your Bill is, that the 25 shall be nominated by ballot, instead of by the discretion of the Master of the Crown Office. I see two evils attending the form under your amendment.

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